

## Message Text

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63

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-14 PM-07 NSC-07 SP-03 SS-20 RSC-01

CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-11 NSAE-00 PA-04 USIA-15 PRS-01

SAJ-01 SIL-01 EB-11 OMB-01 LAB-06 TRSE-00 DRC-01 /130 W

----- 051457

R 061419Z SEP 74

FM AMEBASSY OSLO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8674

INFO AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY HELSINKI

AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

USMISSION NATO

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT NO

SUBJECT: NORWEGIAN PRIME MINISTER GIVEN VOTE OF CONFIDENCE BY  
LABOR PARTY; TAX REDUCTION PLEDGE REITERATED

REF: A) OSLO 4037 B) OSLO 4052 C) OSLO 2244 D) OSLO A-59

SUMMARY. THE NORWEGIAN LABOR PARTY'S NATIONAL  
COMMITTEE MEETING AUGUST 30-31 PUBLICLY CLOSED  
RANKS IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY. IT GAVE PRIME  
MINISTER BRATTELI AND HIS GOVERNMENT A VOTE OF  
CONFIDENCE AND STRESSED THE PARTY'S COMMITMENT  
TO "SIGNIFICANT TAX REDUCTIONS" IN THIS FALL'S  
BUDGET, WHICH IT SAID WOULD REVERSE THE EVER-  
INCREASING TAX TREND DURING THE NON-SOCIALIST  
BORTEN GOVERNMENT (1965-71). IT ALSO TOOK A  
RESPONSIBLE POLITICALLY-DIFFICULT STAND AGAINST  
IMMEDIATE UNILATERAL FISHERY LIMIT EXTENSION  
(REF. A) AND FILLED A CABINET VACANCY (REF. B).  
RUMORS OF FAR-RACHING MINISTERIAL CHANGES

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PROVED UNFOUNDED. INTERNAL DISARRAY AND  
PESSIMISM CONTINUES, HOWEVER, ESPECIALLY AS A

RESULT OF A SUPRISE RESIGNATION ANNOUNCEMENT  
BY THE PARTY'S SECRETARY GENERAL. END SUMMARY.

1. THE MEETING CAME AT THE END OF A SUMMER OF  
UNUSUALLY OPEN SELF-CRITICISM, AGONIZING RE-  
APPRAISALS AND OFTEN CONTRADICTIONARY STATEMENTS  
OF POSITION BY VARIOUS PARTY LEADERS, PARTICULARLY  
IN THE PARTY PRESS. THE PARTY'S GALLUP POLL  
SUPPORT HAS SLIPPED EVER SINCE LAST FALL'S  
DISASTROUS ELECTION SHOWING, REACHING A LOW  
OF 32.1 PER CENT IN JUNE (DOWN FROM 50.4 PER  
CENT IN MARCH 1971 AND FROM 40 PERCENT IN  
AUGUST 1973, JUST BEFORE THE ELECTION) AND  
PARTY LEADERS FEAR FURTHER SLIPPAGE IN THE  
AUGUST POLL SOON TO BE RELEASED. THE OPEN  
DEBATE WAS TOUCHED OFF BY BRATTELI'S JUNE  
ANNOUNCEMENT THAT HE WOULD STEP DOWN AS PARTY  
CHAIRMAN AT THE PARTY CONVENTION NEXT APRIL  
(REF. C). A MAJOR NEW DIRECTION IN LABOR PARTY  
POLICY EMERGING FROM THIS DEBATE HAS BEEN THE  
EMPHASIS ON TAX REDUCTION, DEMANDED BY TRADE  
UNION FEDERATION (LO) PRESIDENT TOR ASPENGRØN  
AND PROMISED BY FINANCE MINISTER KLEPPE AT A  
KEY LO/LABOR PARTY ECONOMIC CONFERENCE IN OSLO  
IN JUNE.

2. MAJOR SURPRISE OF THE MEETING WAS THE  
ANNOUNCEMENT THAT PARTY SECRETARY  
GENERAL RONALD BYE WOULD NOT BE A CANDIDATE FOR  
REELECTION NEXT SPRING (REF. A). INDICATIONS  
ARE THAT HIS RESIGNATION IS DIRECTED PRINCIPALLY  
AGAINST HIS IMMEDIATE SUPERIOR, PARTY VICE CHAIR-  
MAN REIULF STEEN, IS PROVOKED BY CONSTANT LEAKS  
OF INTERNAL PARTY CONVERSATIONS AND INFORMATION  
AND MAY BE THE OPERNING GUN IN A DRIVE BY MOD-  
ERATES TO KILL STEEN'S CHANCES TO SUCCEED  
BRATTELI AS PARTY CHAIRMAN. A MAJOR WEAPON IS  
THIS DRIVE MAY BE RECENT PUBLIC STATEMENTS BY  
STEEN WARNING AGAINST PANDERING TO "REACTIONARY"  
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FORCES BY STRESSING TAX REDUCTIONS TO THE DETRI-  
MENT OF SOCIAL PROGRAMS AND PUBLIC SECTOR EXPENDI-  
TURES AND INSISTING THAT THIS FALL'S TAX REDUCTIONS  
SHOULD BE A "ONE TIME" ONLY ACTION. A KEY SUPPORTER  
OF OFVAR NORDLI, ONE OF STEEN'S RIVALS, TOLD AN  
EMBASSY OFFICER THAT STEEN'S STATEMENT DID NOT  
HELP THE PARTY IN ITS EFFORTS TO WIN BACK VOTER  
SUPPORT BY DEVELOPING A TAX-REDUCTION IMAGE AND  
INSTEAD CREATED CONFUSION ABOUT THE PARTY'S  
OBJECTIVES.

3. A FEW DAYS BEFORE THE MEETING, A YOUNG LABOR STORTINGSMAN AND PROVINCIAL LABOR PARTY CHAIRMAN, FINN KRISTENSEN, SUGGESTED IN A PRESS INTERVIEW THAT BRATTELI SHOULD RESIGN NOW IN FAVOR OF PARTY STORTING GROUP LEADER NORDLI, IN ORDER TO REJUVENATE THE PARTY AND ITS IMAGE. BRATTELI REPORTEDLY CALLED FOR AND GOT THE VOTE OF CONFIDENCE IN RESPONSE. THE MANNER AND TIMING OF KRISTENSEN'S SUGGESTION IRRITATED MANY IN THE PARTY, AND WAS SOMEWHAT EMBARRASSING TO NORDLI, BUT REPORTEDLY REFLECTS A MAJOR CURRENT IN PARTY THINKING. ITS IMMEDIATE EFFECT WAS TO RALLY THE PARTY AROUND BRATTELI AND REPORTEDLY IT IS NEARLY CERTAIN THAT BRATTELI WILL REMAIN IN OFFICE AT LEAST UNTIL NEXT SPRING AND PROBABLY UNTIL AFTER THE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS IN FALL 1975, BARRING PARLIAMENTARY UPSETS OR OTHER UNEXPECTED OCCURRENCES.

COMMENT: LABOR PRESS HAS HERALDED MEETING AS NEW BEGINNING, CLOSING OF RANKS, AND TO DISCORD AND INTROSPECTION, BUT PARTY INSIDERS FEEL THAT THIS UNCOMFORTABLE PERIOD IS FAR FROM OVER AND FEAR THAT SHOCK OF BYE ANNOUNCEMENT WILL FURTHER REDUCE CONFIDENCE IN AND WITHIN PARTY. OF FOUR ELECTED LABOR PARTY OFFICIALS, ONE (ARBEIDERBLADET EDITOR) HAS BEEN REPLACED THIS YEAR (REF. D) AND TWO (CHAIRMAN BRATTELI AND SEC GEN BYE) HAVE ANNOUNCED THEY WILL STEP DOWN NEXT SPRING. ONLY VICE CHAIRMAN STEEN  
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IS UNAFFECTED, BUT HE TOO IS CERTAIN TO LEAVE HIS POST NEXT SPRING, EITHER TO MOVE UP TO THE CHAIRMANSHIP OR OUT TO THE ARBEIDERBLADET EDITORSHIP OR SOME OTHER POST. THIS ATMOSPHERE OF DISINTEGRATING LEADERSHIP IS REPORTEDLY PRODUCING UNCERTAINTY AND DISCOURAGEMENT IN THE PARTY.  
BUCHANAN

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## Message Attributes

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